

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CO  
SUBJ: PRESIDENT LOPEZ REVIEWS 1977

1. IN A NATIONAL RADIO INTERVIEW DECEMBER 25, PRESIDENT LOPEZ REVIEWED THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EVENTS OF 1977, STATED THAT GOOD RELATIONS EXISTED BETWEEN HIS ADMINISTRATION AND THE MILITARY, AND REFERRED TO A SUBSTANTIAL LOAN GRANTED TO THE GOC BY AN UNIDENTIFIED U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY. FOLLOWING ARE THE MAIN POINTS OF THIS INTERVIEW.

2. LOPEZ DENIED THAT HE HAS HAD ANY CONFLICT WITH THE MILITARY IN 1977, THAT THERE HAVE BEEN ANY THREATS OF A MILITARY COUP, OR OF ANY LACK OF SUPPORT BY THE MILITARY FOR HIS ADMINISTRATION. THE MILITARY, HE SAID, HAS FULLY SUPPORTED HIS GOVERNMENT AND, IN TURN, DESERVES THE FULL SUPPORT OF ALL THE PEOPLE. HE DEFENDED THE MILITARY AGAINST ATTACKS BY A MINORITY OF THE NATIONAL PRESS, STATING THAT POLITICAL LEADERS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THIS SORT OF TREATMENT, BUT THAT MILITARY LEADERS ARE NOT AND THEY THEREFORE REACT DIFFERENTLY. THIS WAS AN APPARENT EFFORT BY LOPEZ TO EXPLAIN THE PUBLIC DECLARATION OF LAST WEEK BY TOP MILITARY OFFICIALS, IN WHICH THEY COMPLAINED OF PRESS ATTACKS ON, AND CRITICISM OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT (BOGOTA 11827).

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LOPEZ SAID THE REAL THREAT TO PRESS FREEDOM WAS NOT FROM THE MILITARY BUT FROM JOURNALISTS WHO ABUSED THEIR RESPONSIBILITY.

3. ON SECURITY, LOPEZ REVIEWED THE STEPS TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN THE SECURITY FORCES, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIFIC AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE VARIOUS SECURITY AGENCIES, THE CENTRALIZATION OF KIDNAPPING INVESTIGATIONS UNDER THE DAS, AND

THE ADDITION OF 5,000 MEN TO THE POLICE FORCE. WHILE REFERRING TO SEVERAL STUDIES ON THE SECURITY PROBLEM UNDERTAKEN EARLY THIS YEAR BY FOREIGN MISSIONS, LOPEZ NOTED THAT THE GOC HAD RECEIVED A 12 MILLION DOLLAR LOAN FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT THROUGH A FEDERAL AGENCY IN PHILADELPHIA, WHICH WAS USED TO PURCHASE ARMS AND COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT FOR THE POLICE. THE EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO IDENTIFY ANY SUCH LOAN, AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT BE ABLE TO FURNISH ON THIS SUBJECT.

4. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, LOPEZ AGAIN PRAISED CONGRESS BUT NOTED THAT THE OPPOSITION FORCES (CLEARLY REFERRING TO THE FOLLOWERS OF LIBER PARTY PRE-CANDIDATE CARLOS LLERAS AND OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S OSPINA-PASTRANA FACTION) HAD KEPT CONGRESS FROM ENACTING A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT PIECES OF LEGISLATION. THESE INCLUDED A NEW ELECTORAL REFORM BILL, A TWENTY PERCENT WAGE INCREASE FOR GOC EMPLOYEES, RATIFICATION OF THE MARITIME BOUNDARIES TREATY WITH COSTA RICA, AND PASSAGE OF THE LAW EXTENDING COLOMBIAN MARITIME SOVEREIGNTY TO A 200 MILE LIMIT.

5. LOPEZ DESCRIBED INFLATION AS BEING CAUSED BY FACTORS BEYOND THE ADMINISTRATION'S CONTROL. THESE INCLUDED THE SEVERE EFFECTS OF THE DROUGHT, VERY HIGH COFFEE PRICES WHICH INCREASED THE CAPACITY TO BUY CONSUMER GOODS, AND THE HIGH COST OF IMPORTED OIL. HE OFFERED NO OUTLOOK FOR 1978, BUT DID HINT THAT THE INTERNAL PRICE FOR GASOLINE AND OTHER PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MAY BE RAISED IN THE COMING YEAR.

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6. COMMENT: THE INTERVIEW WAS PERHAPS MOST NOTABLE FOR THE STATEMENT OF SUPPORT LOPEZ OFFERED TO THE MILITARY, AND HIS STRONG ATTACK AGAINST CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE PRESS WHICH HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF HIS ADMINISTRATION, SEVERAL TOP MILITARY OFFICIALS, AND HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY. THE STATEMENT SHOULD FURTHER CALM THE CONCERN OVER THE MILITARY DECLARATION, AND HELP SMOOTH HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MILITARY LEADERS. HIS COMMENT ON THE LEGISLATIVE RECORD, HOWEVER, TENDS TO OVERSTRESS THE ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION, AND OVERLOOKS THE FACT THAT HIS SUPPORTERS IN CONGRESS HAD AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF VOTES. THE REAL STUMBLING BLOCK TO PASSAGE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM WAS THE HIGH RATE OF ABSENTEEISM AND THE LACK OF DISCIPLINE AMONG PRO-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS.

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## Message Attributes

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